THE IRREGULARITIE OF A PRIVATE PRAYER IN A PUBLICK CONGREGATION.

By P. Sherlock of Winwick

In a Letter to a Friend.

ANNO DOMINI, 1674.

THE

IRREGULARITIE

HARVARD COLLEGE
Nov 19 1929
LIBRARY

Huntington Brown

OF A

PRIVATE PRAYER

IN

A PUBLICK CONGREGATION.

In a Letter to a Friend.

ANNO DOMINI 1674.

THE IRREGULARITIE of a *Private* Prayer in a *Publick* Congregation.

Sir,

I Have sent you herein my repeated and enlarged Thoughts, upon what was once the subject of our serious discourse; wherein I would not at all disparage, or in the least undervalue, the *private* prayers and devotions of any person, whether of the *Laity* or *Clergie*, whether those prayers be by *himself* composed, or by *others*, whether they be *premeditated*, or sometimes *ejaculatorie*; whether *fixed*, or *occasionall*; *vocall* or *mentall*; for thus, and all these waies, every truly religious Christian prays and undoubtedly findes the benefit, and feels the comfort of such holy breathings forth of his Soul unto Heaven in his private recesses.

But that any Person, especially such who have entred into holy Orders in this Church of *England*, should presume to use any Prayers in *Publick* of his own *private conception*, whether premeditate, or extemporary, before, or after his Sermon, other than those Prayers, which are by publick Authority allowed, and published to that end; I humbly conceive (with submission to my Superiors) to be unlawfull in several respects.

First, *'Tis a Disorder and Confusion in the Service of God*: For thus the *Publick* and *Private* worship of God are confounded, whilst those *Private Prayers*, which our Lord hath confined to the private closet, do yet, contrary to his express com-

command appear in *Publick* and usurp the place of his Publick Service in the Congregation. The holy duties of *Publick*, and *Private* Prayers, as they are distinct in their own nature, and constant use, so they are distinguished by our Lord, and distinct rules prescribed for the distinct and discreet performance of either Duty. *First*, For *Private Prayer* Matt. 6. 6. *When thou Prayest, enter into thy closet* —— speaking in the singular number to every particular person. *Secundly*, For Publick Prayer v. 7. *but when you Pray use not vain repetitions* —— speaking in the plurall number to many assembled together: where, to avoid the Heathenish practise of much speaking, or multitudinous words in Prayer, *v.* 8. a short and most excellent Form is given us *v.* 9. Thus then *publick* Prayer being distinguished by our Lord from *private*, we are thereby forbidden to confound them in their use, and practise: 1. Cor. 14. 40: *Let all things be done decently and in order*: not preposterously and disorderly, one part of divine worship undermining another, and the lesser and more particular Duty usurping upon the greater, and more general religious Office.

Secondly, 'Tis not only a *disorderly*, but also an *unreasonable Service*, and so not likely to be acceptable to him, who is both the God of order, and of wisdom. And the unreasonableness of this *Private* Prayer in *Publick*, will appear, by considering: That all prayers offered up unto God in Publick, must be publickly known, consented unto, and agreed upon (which the *Private* prayer generally is not) by all them that joyn therein: upon which agreement (and not otherwise) Christ hath promised his presence, *viz.*, to hear our Prayers, and grant our requests, Mat. 18. 19, 20. *Again I say unto you, If two of you shall agree upon Earth, touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done unto them of my Father, which is in Heaven: for where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them*; whereupon saith the Glosse out of *Origen*, *This is the cause we are not heard when we pray, in that we agree not in all things.* —— *For as in Musick there must be harmonie and agreement of voices, or else it delights not the hearer; so in the Church, an assent and agreement is*

necessarie,

necessarie, or else God is not pleased, neither will he hear the voice of our prayers. 'Tis this *agreement* in prayer, that denominates our publick worship of God, *Common-Prayer*; because agreed upon by *common* consent, which doth presuppose, that 'tis known to all, that all may joyn therein: So it was ever in the Church of Christ; the faithful knew, what they prayed for; and this, not at the second hand, from the mouth of the Minister, but before they joyned with him; So Saint *Chrysostome*, *Can. that are faithful know, what things are to be desired in prayer, because all prayer*, viz. *that is in Publick, ought to be common*: 'Tis the Exhortation of *Ignatius*, who lived in the times of the Apostles and saw our Lord in the flesh, *That we assemble together in one place, and use one prayer common to all.* For if the prayers of a Congregation be not known, common and agreed: Then

Chryſ. Hom. 6. in Tim.

Ignat. Ep. ad Magn.

First, The People cannot joyn therein, it being little less *than the sacrifice of fools*, for men to ask of God, they know not what; but wholly depend upon the Ministers unknown expressions.

Secondly, A Prayer, that is unknown before it be offered up, is to an *English* man, though spoke in *English*, as if it were a prayer to him, who understands no *Latine*, for they are both lame, and maimed, and cannot stand with common sense, except they make use of that Crutch, which we so much blame in the Papists, *viz. an implicite faith* to support them; and both the one and the other do equally transgress that rule of prayer prescribed by the Apostle, *1 Cor. 14. 15. I will pray with the spirit, and will pray with understanding also.*

Thirdly, It is against both the judgment and practice of the Universal Church of Christ, no footsteps thereof are to be found in *Leodic. ed.* Antiquitie, but many Canons of the Church against it, whereof some are noted in the Margin. (a)

(a) *Concil. Antioch. Anno.* 320. *Can.* 15. 17. & *alt. Concil. Milevit.* 2. *An.* 416. *Can.* 12. *Concil. Epaunens. celeb. An.* 509. *Concil. Gerund. celeb. An.* 516. *c.* 1. *Concil. Tolet. quart. Can.* 2. *Concil. Venet. celeb. An.* 452. *Can.* 15. *Concil. Bracar.* 1. *celeb. An. Can.* 561. 19. & 20. & 22. *Concil. Vasen. celeb.* 442. *Can.* 5. 6. & 7.

Fourthly

Fourthly, 'Tis a *transgression of the Laws and Orders of this particular Church of England*, and this accompanied with the breach of that solemn promise, which every Minister, lawfully Ordained, hath made: no man being admitted into holy Orders, until he hath attested the *lawfulness of the book of Common Prayer, and promised that he himself will use the same and no other in publick*, subscribing with his own hand this attestation and promise: so that the contrary practice in the use of any *Private* prayer by any Minister of this Church, is a breach of *Fidelitie* to the Church, and to the Reverend *Bishop* that Ordained him.

Fifthly, 'Tis *also a Transgression of the Common Law of the Land*, which in the Acts of Parliament for Uniformitie in Common-prayer, both old and new, enjoyns peremptorily, under severe penalties, *That no man shall use any prayer openly* or in publick, *but such as are set forth in the said book*: so that both in this and in the former respects 'tis an act of Disobedience to the Higher Powers, and breach of the fifth Commandement.

I might adde, in the last place, the Non-conformitie of this Practice with all other Protestant Communicants beyond the Seas, their Ministers being neither fond of it themselves, nor permitted such a Liberty by their Governors.

Object. But to solve all these Particulars, 'tis said, A *Private* Prayer before Sermon is allowed, nay enjoyned by the 55 Canon of the Church: which is called indeed *a Form of Prayer*, but therein the Minister is not bound up to the use of the same words, but may pray *to that effect*.

Answ. *First*, But surely, there is no man, that understandeth sense, and is not blinded with prejudice, will say, That the Form prescribed in the Canons, is a *Form* of prayer, but an *Exhortation* only to move the people to joyn in prayer *for Christs Holy Catholick Church, for the Kings Majestie, for*——and 'tis most properly called *a bidding of prayer*. And 'twas Mr. *Cartwright*, that Ring-leader of the Puritan-Faction in the time of Q. *Elizabeth*, who first turned this Bidding prayer, into a long prayer

prayer of his own head, and was the very engine, whereby he and his followers undermined the Common Prayers of the Church.

Answ. Second. It is a very unseemly thing (if seriously considered) to tell the Great King of Heaven (by way of prayer to him) that the Kings Majestie is King of *England, Scotland, &c. Defender of the Faith, &c.* or to tell him of *such or such a Lord*, that he is *Earl of such or such a Place — Lord of such; one of the Privy Councel — his very good Lord and Patron*: clauses with several particulars in that Canon are very improper to be said unto God by way of Prayer, but not so by way of Exhortation *unto* Prayer.

Thirdly, Because the Observance of this Canon was obnoxious to the censure and exceptions of many, who desired an absolute Prayer in stead of that *bidding* Form, it was proposed at the Convocation held *An.* 1640. that it might be so ordered; and accordingly there was a short Prayer drawn up, comprizing all the heads of the Canon; The which, notwithstanding the confidence some had of its universal reception, was rejected by the most Reverend Arch-Bishop, who judged it neither safe nor fitting to alter that Canon, which was founded on the Injunctions of *Queen Elizabeth* and *King Edward* 6. at the first Reformation; which sufficiently evinceth the said Canon to be no Prayer, nor yet lawful to be altered and used *Prayerwise*.

Fourthly, 'Tis a *presumptuous usurpation and Affront upon the Church of Christ* for any man to thrust himself upon such a Ministerial Office, and he is not by the Authority of the Church entrusted with all, and whosoever acts the *Presbyterian* in this *particular becomes Independant*; the one having no more just Authority derived from the Church, that ordained him, to use such a private Prayer of his own in *Publick*, than the other hath either to Preach or Pray in Publick, being not admitted into holy Orders, nor lawfully called thereunto.

Fifthly, 'Tis *an Innovation in Religion*, a new up-start practise, brought into the Church not above 70 years ago, and may therefore,

therefore be reckoned *inter profanas vocum novitates*, which the Apostle admonished to *avoid, even all profane and vain bab-*
1 *Tim.* 6. 20. *lings*, (a) canting language, *new words*, and *new waies*, such as are contrary to those *old paths*, and those *good wais* which the
Jer. 16. 16. Lord commands us *to enquire after and to walk therein*. And such *New wais* are fitly called profane, *quasi procul a fano*, saith
Lyr. in Loc. the Commentator; because far from the Temple, or different from the words and wais of Christs Church, and contrary to
1 *Tim.* 6. the Apostles *depositum tene*, in the following words, *hold fast that which is committed to thee. i. e.* saith the Father, *quod tibi creditum, non quod a te inventum*, what the Church whereby thou art addmitted to the Ministerial Function, hath commited to thy trust, and commanded thee to observe, hold fast that, keep close to that, not following thine own fancy and invention to bring in what is New, which ever undermines the Old, and true way of Divine worship.

Seventhly. *If as all or command from God be herein pretended, though not allowed by the Church, yet in this particular they are at a loss*, except they pretend immediate Revelation with the Enthusiasts: For there is neither command, nor example, in holy Writ, to justifie this private Prayer in Publick: we have many Sermons of the Apostles upon record, but no Prayer before any of them, so that this is an act of usurpation upon the Publick Divine Worship, a presumption to do that, which God hath no where commanded, nor the Church of Christ allowed.

Eighthly. Liberty being permitted for any person of what perswasion soever to vent his private conceptions by way of *Prayer* in Publick, *opens a gap to Heresie and Schism in the Church, to Sedition and Rebellion in the Kingdome*; For their private errours and designs being inserted in their Prayers, do insinuate into the Affections; and more mightily enflame
a 1. *Tim.* 6. 20. 21. the *People*, than by any other way of perswasion whatsoever. Old Truths being undermined by New wais of worship and vain bablings, the constant Parents of errors in the Faith. (a)

Ninthly.

Ninthly. Thus Separations and Divisions, both amongst Ministers, and People are bred and nourished: for whilst one Minister, or gifted man (as such are called) Prays thus, and thus, and another in a way, and with words diverse from him: one sort and Sect of men likes this mans way, method, and language, tone and gesture; another sort is taken more with anothers way——Hence; *One saith: I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollo; and another, I of Cephas* (a) *which is the life and being of Schism*: the remedie whereof is; To obey that most pathetical exhortation: Now *I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that yee all speak the same thing, That there be no divisions amongst you.* (b) To speak the same thing and to use the same words in the Publick worship of God: or as the same Apostle; *To glorify God with one minde and one mouth* is the way to avoid divisions and to take off the People from their partiality and fondness, in preferring one Minister before another, merely for their less, or more eminencie; in this unwarrantable way of Praying.

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 12.

(b) 1. Cor. 1. 10.

Tenthly; By this Private Prayer, the Publick Prayers of the Church are implyed to be imperfect and deficient; are slighted, nay contemned and undermined. For they, with whom this way is in repute, generally slight, & slubbour over the *Common-Prayer* carelessly, irreverently, and indevoutly; but to their own conceived Prayers give all the advantages of seeming zeal, both in their tone and language, elevation of eyes, hands——and no marvel then, that the one be so much applauded by the vulgar, and the other slighted; especially when they are perswaded by these Enthusiasts; that Common-Prayer and all the Ceremonies in that celebration are taken out of the Mass-book; that they are but a dead letter and the invention of man, whereas the *private, conceived* Prayer, is no less than the immediate influence of the holy Spirit of God;

Object. At least they say; That Prayers read in a Book, have not that quickning vigour in them, like to the Prayer Memoriter and without book; The one savours of the deadness of the Letter, the other of the quickning Spirit.

Answ.

Answ. But in holy Prayer it is not the words said, whether *written*, or *not written*, whether said *within*, or *without* Book; but the affectionate Zeal of him, that prays, that gives vigor and efficacy to this holy Duty; and where this is wanting, the fault is not in the Prayers themselves; but in the Persons, that profanely slight and undervalue them; the deadness, they talk of, lies in their own hearts, which are not touched with the quickening spirit of devotion, in the use of those holy and good Prayers. And whosoever is more affected with a conceived, than a written Prayer, thinks sure; That the one is more immediately by inspiration from Heaven than the *other*, and so smells strong of the Heresie of Enthusiasm; I am sure; To speak foolishly and impertinently hath been usually accounted, and called *speaking without Book.*

Orationis sublimitas ex parte orantis non ex sublimitate, vel subtilitate verborum, sed humilitate & devotionis affectu ejus qui orat pensanda est. Jac. Alvar. *de inquis. pac.*

Object. 3. *Object.* 3. There be many Episcopal Persons, and such, who both use, and are zealous for the Liturgie of the Church, do yet use *Privat* Prayer of their own before Sermon; the which surely they would never do, if they conceived it unlawful.

Answ. *Answ.* This is done, 'tis confest, by many Persons of known worth and integritie: some with good intentions, to win upon such Persons, whom no other kind of Prayers will please; some, that their Private Prayer may be a Pattern, whereby their People may learn to pray in Private: and for these reasons, I conceive, this practice hath been, and is still over-look'd by Ecclesiastical Superiors: But in the general; this custom is continued through inadvertency, in not considering, and deeply weighing the *equity* or *iniquity*, *fitness* or *unfitness* thereof: Nor can the practise of this, or any other custom prove the same to be lawful. There is a great difference betwixt *consuetudo* and *corruptela*: the one is laudable, the other unlawful; many persons also, that are eminent in knowledge, and Pietie, in the general, may, through long custom, and many

many examples, fail in some particulars, through inconsideration: Many also are induced thereunto, conceiving that variety of expressions, and change of Forms in Prayer do more work upon the Affections of the People, and stir up their Devotions, than one and the same constant standing Form. *Object.* 4.

Answ. 1. This doth more tickle the itching ears of the People indeed; and the itching of the ears comes from the corruption of the heart: And surely their Devotion is very cold, that must be warmed by variety of expressions; the which in preaching may be commendable, but not in praying, except by way of privat ejaculations, it being one design of exhortations, and moving admonitions in Sermons, to excite the Affections to what is taught, and exhorted unto: whereas holy Prayer is not the cause, but the effect and issue of devout Affections; and 'tis then only acceptable to God, when it comes from a heart replete with humility, compunction, fervor, and divine love; which do necessarily infer foreknowledg of the Prayers, we use; that they be such, as whereby our devout Affections may be expressed. *Answ.* 1.

Answ. 2. It is generally observed by the Masters of Mystical Theology, and Spiritual Life; That there is a *sensible Devotion*, which begins in the sensitive nature, producing tenderness of spirit, drawing often sighs from the bosome, and tears from the eyes, and begets a secret delectation and sweetness in the soul; with which many persons are much taken and transported, as conceiving such pleasing delights in Prayer to be no other than the influences of the holy Spirit of God. And yet this exterior pleasure of a sensible Devotion is not always a sign of a sound and right temper of holiness in the soul: Beause, *First*; many wicked, irregenerate persons may, and have enjoyed the same. *Secondly*; It may proceed from the natural temper. *Thirdly*; From the vehement intention of the minde. *Fourthly*; From the mournful tone, cadence of *Answ.* 2. *Jac. Alhaz. de inquis. pac. lib. 2. par. 3. cap. 3. Sancti Soph. Treat. 3. serm. 2. c. 5.*

words, and power of language. And such sensible delights, even in Prayer, are sometimes the insinuations and illusions of the Evil Spirit, to puff up the soul *with self-love, vain-glory, presumption in God's favour, and contempt of others.* I deny not, but such sensible consolations are often the influences of the holy and true Spirit, given us for our encouragement in holy divine Offices, in the love of God and obedience: but there is great discretion and humility also required in the use we make of them; neither are we overhighly to esteem of them (as the Casuist *(a)* observes) *Because they are neither true virtues, nor necessary effects of solid virtues, neither are they necessary instruments of proficiency in true devotion: For without such sensible consolations, many holy persons have ascended to a great height of virtue, and purity of minde.*

(a) *Consolationes sensibiles quamvis non sunt despicienda, non sunt tamen supra modum æstimandæ: quia nec veræ virtutes, nec solidarum virtutum effectus nec necessaria profectus instrumenta sine quibus plurimi ad magnum virtutem ac mentis puritatem ascendunt.* Jac. Alv. ibid.

The strongest Devotions, and most effectual Prayers, are seldomest attended with these sensible consolations, and sweetnesses, which flow in upon variety of taking expressions; for a great Devotion is like a great Grief, which is not so expressive in words, as a less moderate passion: a lesser Grief also is wasted away by tears and complaints, whilst the greater is both more silent and more lasting; so the less and more weak Devotion of the Soul, is breathed out and wasted in variety of language; not the solid, strong, and lasting fervor. Such was the prevailing devotion of b *Moses, when he fell down before the* (b) *Lord:* and that of *Hannah* also, when she prayed in the (c) Temple: Their c 1 *Sam.* 1. words in their prayers were few, and low, unheard; but their 10, 11. desires and affections strong, and prevalent, as being not wasted by much speaking. And such was that Devotion of our Lord in the Garden and on the Cross, when he poured out his Soul in Prayers and Supplications with d *Heb.* 5. 7. strong crying and *(d)* tears: His words were few, but his devotion

devotion great, and prevailing mightily: which devotion was neither begotten nor increased, nor poured forth in a flood of language and various expressions: *for he went away* (saith the holy Ghost) *and* (e) *prayed, saying the same words.* So that setled and stinted Forms of Prayer, may be expressive enough of the greatest Devotion: nor is God more pleased, or the Soul that prayeth, more profited by variety of expressions, though the exterior pleasure of a sensible devotion may be raised thereby. e *Mat.* 26. 44.

Object. 5. But stinted Forms of Prayer cannot suit with all Tempers and Conditions: a Garment may as well be made to fit the changeable Moon, as one Form of Prayer to fit all men, or any one man at all times. *Object.* 5.

Answ. 1. 'Tis true; That limited Forms of Prayer cannot be fitted to every mans Fantasie and Affection, especially amongst such men, where such Prayers are either suspected or coldly entertained: but they may be fitted to all mens *necessities*, though not to their *curiosities*; they may be such, as may sufficiently serve every mans *duty*, though not please all mens *fantasies*. *Answ.* 1.

Answ. 2. Though they suit not with every mans particular *condition* in all circumstances, 'tis no argument against them; for that would conclude against all Laws whatsoever, wherein 'tis impossible to make provision for all particular circumstances and accidents, that occur: 'tis sufficient, that all Publick Sanctions do secure the Publick Interest, and whatsoever hath influence upon Publick Societies and Communities of men. *Answ.* 2.

Answ. 3. Every mans Private Condition, wherein he may be separate from the Publick, is to be fitted by his private Prayers; and therein he hath liberty to expatiate himself, and enjoy all those fancied benefits, and self-pleasing sweetnesses, which variety and liberty can afford him; *Answ.* 3.

him; that which cannot be expected in publick Prayers, which are of a publick Nature and Design, suiting with publick Interests, the Duties and Conditions of all Christians; and providing also for publick Events, that are either probable, or can be reasonably foreseen.

Answ. 4. *Answ.* 4. There are many Circumstances, relating to particular mens conditions, that are not fit to be inserted in the publick Service of the Church, or to be mentioned in *Publick*. It is more safe and prudent, to recommend many things unto God in general expressions, than to insist particularly and positively upon them, especially in such things as are temporal and worldly, wherein men are more apt to be positive, and expressive than becometh. Our blessed Saviour knew well enough the particular wants and conditions of his Disciples, when they begg'd of him to be taught to pray; yet he descends not to any enumeration of those particulars, but gives them a Form of Prayer, in general terms, because it was for a publick use and benefit.

Answ. 5. *Answ.* 5. If any defects, and inconveniencies, be fancied in those devout and accurate Prayers of the Church, which have been framed and approved by the long experience of 1600. years, to fit all publick concerns, and meet with all necessary conditions, to be commended unto God in publick; how much more, may we fear, the many *inconveniencies*, *disorders*, *irregularities*—— in the private Prayer, though pretended to compleat and fill up the emptiness of the publick? The *defects*, the *impertinencies*, *tautologies*, *errors* and *blasphemies* of many such privat Prayers are obvious to each mans observation.

Object. 6. *Object.* 6. 'Tis further said; That it may as well be ordered, That one common Sermon should be preached in all Churches, and at all times, as that one common Prayer should be constantly used, and no other.

Answ.

Answ. 1. The Church doth indeed trust all her Priests and Deacons to *preach* to the People and by way of Sermon to exercise their gifts, for the edification of others; wherein variety of expressions are very useful to move, excite, admonish, exhort, reprove—— which are the ends of *preaching*, not so of *praying*: as before was observed. *Answ.* 1.

Answ. 2. If the Minister chance to fail by impertinent, tedious, or any irregular expressions in *preaching*, the matter is of less moment than to err in *prayer*: Because, *First*; It is more safe to be bold with the People than with the great Majesty of Heaven; the People may pardon an indiscretion, a rudeness, a mistake, if any such happen in a Sermon; but that boldness, or impudence rather, which ventures to offer up unto God their mistakes and indecent expressions, is not so venial and easily pardonable. *Secondly*, Sermons to the People are but the means, not any essential parts of Gods worship it self: but holy Prayer is a part and the principal part of Gods outward worship; so that to mistake and err in the one, is but *indiscretion*, if not wilful; but to err in the other is *impiety* and *irreligion*. A mistake, a falshood in Prayer, is *not a lye unto men, but unto God*: (*a*) The great Sin for which *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were struck with sudden death. Which should strike the hearts of all men with such an awful fear, as not to dare to utter any thing unto God, that may prove false, or be improper to be spoken; nor yet to go beyond what they are authoriz'd to say in publick by the commands of God and of his Church. *Answ.* 2. a *Acts* 5. 4, 5.

Object. 7. Our Saviour prayed Extempory, and by the Spirit; and his Prayer (*John* 17.) was long, and no part of a Liturgy. *Object.* 7.

Answ. Those Prayers of our Lord, which are recorded, were not Extempory, but set Forms, and parts of the Jewish Liturgy in the Temple; which might be proved by *Answ.*

by particulars, if it were not too tedious to be here inserted: And his prayer *Joh.* 17. was a privat, not a publick Prayer: 'twas designed indeed to a publick use and benefit, not offered up in Publick, and with his Disciples, though for, and in their behalf: and 'twas a prayer, that was proper and peculiar to Christ alone, as the only Mediator betwixt God and man, and so not to be drawn into an example.

Object. 8. *Object.* 8. *Solomon* pray'd in the Temple a *Privat* Prayer of his *own* in *Publick*, 2 *Chron.* 6. So did *Hezekias*, 2 *Chron.* 30. 18. So did *Elijah* the Prophet, 1 *Kings* 18. 16. and St. *Paul* the Apostle, *Acts* 20. 36.

Answ. *Answ.* All these prayers, with all others recorded in holy writ, were undoubtedly the immediate dictates of Gods holy Spirit, whereunto no man, without sin and presumption, may pretend, at least, not depend and relie thereupon. And as for St. *Paul*'s Prayer, *Acts* 20. 36. whether 'twas a set Form or not, 'tis not express'd, nor yet many of our Saviours prayers upon record, and so no argument *pro* or *con* to be drawn from thence.

Object. 9. *Object.* 9. The Fathers frequently began their Homilies with prayers, and St *Paul* himself began and ended his Epistles with prayers, and there is a prayer extant of Saint *Ambrose*, which he used before his Sermon.

Answ. *Answ.* But what kind of Prayers these were is not considered, *viz.* Short Collects, or rather Ejaculations, imploring the Divine Assistance, which they used, not always before, but sometimes in the midst of their Sermons also, when they treated of some high mystery of Godliness, or other matter of difficulty, or were transported with more than ordinary zeal to the practice of such or such a virtue, or the eradication of some reigning offence amongst the People; as is frequent in many of St. *Chrysost. Homi-*

lies:

lies: And of St. *Ambroſe*; he, being a Metropolitan, might ſurely aſſume ſuch a power, to compoſe a Prayer for his own uſe, which is not, nay ought not to be allowed to every inferior Presbyter. *Secondly*, Becauſe he uſed a ſhort Prayer, and this but ſomtimes before his Sermon, it doth not follow, That every green-headed Miniſter may uſe a Prayer of his own privat conception twenty times as long as the other, and ſo fully as far diſtant from the pattern, which our Lord hath given us, which is alſo anſwer ſufficient to St. *Paul's* example objected.

Object. 10. But St. *Auguſtine* affirms the neceſſity of this Prayer before Sermon, ſaying (a) That Queen *Eſther prayed for the temporal ſafty of her Nation, before ſhe adventured to ſpak before the King Ahaſuerus, that God would put into her mouth congruous words. How much more ought we to pray for the like gift, when we are to ſpeak for the eternal ſalvation of ſouls, in the Word and Doctrine?* And again, ſaith he, *when the hour is come* (to preach) *before he open his mouth, let him lift up his thirſting ſoul unto God.* *Object.* (a) *Auguſt. de Doct. Chriſtiana.*

Anſw. It is undoubtedly a laudable practiſe, for every Preacher to pray for the Divine Aſſiſtance in his Sermons to the People. And this not only in the *publick* Prayers of the Church, but his *privat* alſo, betwixt God and his own ſoul; and this alſo, as the Father directs, before he opens his mouth in *Publick*. And ſuch was Queen *Eſther's* Prayer in privat, before ſhe publickly ſpake to the King; which makes rather againſt, than for the *Privat* Prayer in *Publick* for and with the whole Congregation: St. *Auguſt.* could not be guilty of any ſuch practiſe; for it was againſt his judgment, being himſelf one of the Two Hundred Fathers of that *Milevitan* Councel, wherein it was decreed; *That no prayer ſhould be uſed in publick, but ſuch as were approved in the Synod*: Somtimes this Father did conclude his Sermon with an Exhortation, conceived in Form of a prayer. *e. g. Converſi* —— *Turning unto the Lord God, Fa-* *Anſw.*

ther Almighty, let us render him all possible thanks, beseeching him of his great mercy, that he would vouchsafe to hear our prayers, and expell the Enemie from having any influence upon our thoughts and desires, words and actions; that he would encrease our faith, govern our minds, fill us with spiritual cogitations, and at last bring us to everlasting happiness through Jesus Christ...... which is not so much a Prayer, as an Invitation to prayer, sutable to the Form prescribed in the Canon of our Church.

Object. 11. The liberty of *Privat* prayer in *Publick* is the way to make an *able Ministrie*; whilest thus they are put on to exercise and improve their Ministerial gifts and graces.

Answ. 'Tis rather the way to make a *Licentious*, *Fanatick*, *Brain-sick* Ministry, and in process of time no Ministry at all; for from this Practice it is, that so very many unlearned, unstable souls have taken up the trade and proved as eminent, at least as well approved of by the people for their gift of Prayer, as the most learned of their Tutorers therein.

And whosoever shall impartially weigh, and without prejudice consider it, he may observe, that this *Privat* prayer in *Publick*, both in Church and at home, is the very life and soul of that Schism, and Division, which is still so perniciously kept up in this Church. 'Tis hereby maintained more than by preaching and disputes: 'Tis from hence that Parties do call their leaders *Godly Ministers*, and themselves *the godly Brethren*: *The children that cry Abba Father*: *The chosen and familiar friends of God*; from their over-saucy and familiar converse with God. This is that great Idol, whom all the world of Non-conformists on this side the pale of the Roman Church adore and worship, crying down the goodly frame of Gods worship in his Church under the notion of *Idolatry*, *Superstition*, and *will-worship*, that every one may *set up his Idols in his own*

heart

heart, follow the sway of their own imaginations, to be guilty themselves of that *Will-worship*, which they falsly impute to the Church of Christ.

Upon this Rock many thousand souls have suffered shipwrack, who have been otherwise piously inclined: For being taken with *holy language*, *religious tone* and *seeming zeal* of this or the other person in their privat conceived Prayers, they have in respect thereof slighted, and undervalued even the Celestial Prayer of God the Son, all the divinely inspired prayers of God the Holy Ghost recorded in Holy Writ, with all the devout and excellent Prayers of the Church of Christ, which are framed after the pattern prescribed by our Lord; commanded by the Higher Powers; used by the devout People of God in all ages and whereby many thousand triumphant Saints in Heaven have pray'd themselves into that blisfull place of Eternal Glory.

After all this: It would be considered;

That, as every error in Religion is very prolifick in bringing forth many others of the same misshapen stamp and nature; so this erroneous way of divine worship, the use of a *Private Prayer* in a *Publick Congregation* is also productive of many mistakes, and falshoods and deformed vais of worship in the management thereof; And

1. Such privat Prayers in *Publick* are generally in the length of them: For *Long Prayers* are *unlawful*.

First; Because they are prohibited, by our Lord, *Mat.* 6.7. *When ye pray, use not vain repetitions*: which cannot be understood of the same Prayer repeated (which is falsly objected against the prayers of the Church) for so pray'd our Lord himself, and his example surely contradicts not his Doctrine; whose Prayer, when most earnest in his Desires, was the same three times repeated, and a very short Prayer also, *Mat.* 26. 44. By *vain repititions* then must be

 meant,

meant the repetitions of the same thing in other words. For *First*, To use multitude of words, and variety of expressions in Prayer is *vain*, *i. e.* superfluous; impertinent and to no purpose; since our Desires may, and ought to be expressed in few words and pertinent. *Secondly*, Such are generally *vain*, *i. e.* empty and insignificant, that have more noise than weight; more sound than sense, serving only to fill up the time, to amuse the mindes, and tickle the itching eares of the Hearers.

That such kinde of *long Prayers* are here forbidden by our Lord, is manifest.

2ly; From the parallel Text quoted in the margin. *Eccles.* 5. 2. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hastie to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.* And this Text in the margin quotes another to the same purpose, *Prov.* 10. 19. *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, but he, that refraineth his lips, is wise.*

3ly; From the custome of the Heathen; as it follows: *Use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do.* It was the maner of the Heathen, saith the ordinarie Glosse out of *Cyprian*, to endeavour rather to be eloquent, than devout in their Prayers; and to be lowd and clamorous rather than fervent and zealous. An example whereof we have, 1 *Kings*, 18. 27. Where *Elijah* mocks the Preists of *Baal* calling upon their Pagan Deities: *Crie alowd, for he is a God; either he is talking or he is pursuing or he is in a journey or peradventure he is asleep and must be awaked.* And accordingly they cried alowd, thinking, as our Saviour here saith; *that they should be heard for their much speaking.* And therefore, as it follows v. 18. *Be not like unto them.* It is a shame for Christians in the Worship of the *True* God, to be like the Heathen in the worship of their *False* and *feigned* Deities. Our Duty is, to endeavour more for humility, purity, and fervency in heart, than for glib, nimble and voluble tongues; to pray, not with multitude of words, and varietie of phrases, but with pertinent and pithy expressions;

pressions; with ardency and godly zeal: and the reason follows: For

Your heavenly Father knoweth, what things you stand in need of before you ask him: He is every where present, and knoweth all things, even the secret of all hearts; and therefore, to court him with *long* and *loud* Prayers implies our ignorance or misbelief of his perfections.

Against such extravagancy in Prayers our Lord prescribes us a Form, with command saying; *After this manner pray ye*, vers. 9. *i.e.* as from the context is manifest, not after the maner of the Heathen, who think to be heard *for their much speaking*, but after this manner, *i. e.* in few words, and such as are pithy, and to purpose.

And, That 'tis the meaning of our Lord in this place; That all our Prayers should be short and not much exceeding the length of the Pattern, he hath given us, is manifest,

1. Not only from the Context impartially weigh'd and understood: but

2. From the Practice of Christs Church, which is undeniably the best and surest Interpreter of Christs meaning in his words. And all the Prayers of the Church of Christ are, and ever were such in all ages, in all places, amongst all persons, that are called Christians: their Liturgies or Publick Prayers are short and pithy, called therefore Collects; as being so many Collections of much matter in few words.

3. Such are all the Prayers of the Holy and True Spirit of God, which stand upon record in Holy Writ, both for use and imitation, *viz.* the whole Book of Psalms, with many more; all which, though some of them be long, as to the whole Psalm or Hymn, yet they are divided by Verses into so many shorter Prayers.

4. Long Prayers are not only forbidden by our Lord, as the custom of the Heathen; but also frequently reproved by him, as the practice of Hypocrites, *Matth.* 23. 14. *Mark* 12. 40. *Luke* 12. 47.

5. By

5. By long and manifold sad experience 'tis well known, and hath been often observed; That all long, conceived Prayers have been guilty of manifold infirmities; light, vain, and unseemly expressions, not fitting to be offered up to the All-wise, All-glorious Majesty of Heaven: yea, many falshoods, many impieties and profanations, have been uttered in such kind of Prayers, and what have been contradictory to the Religious Duties we owe to God and men.

6. If it be here said; How can we be too long in our Prayers, since our Lord continued all night in Prayer, *Luke* 6. 12. and saith also; That we ought *always to pray, and not to faint*, Luke 18. 1. and his Apostle commands, *Continue in prayers, and watch*, Col. 4. 2. and *Pray without ceasing*, 1 Thess. 5. 17. and how can these Commands be obey'd without long Prayers?

Answ. To this I answer; That there is a great difference between long Prayers and praying long. The one is unlawful, because forbidden and reprov'd by our Lord; the other is a Religious Duty, because both commanded and practic'd by him: and therefore St. *Augustin* saith; *Oratio plus gemitibus quam sermonibus agitur; plus fletu quam affatu.* And 'tis thus, *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities*, by quickning our Devotions, and enflaming our Desires; *he maketh intercession for us*; i. e. as the same Father, secretly inclining our hearts to intercede for us, *with groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8. 26. From which Text it is apparent (quite contrary to the Enthusiasts sense thereof) That 'tis inward groanings, not outward bellowings; the internal fervent desires of the Soul, not multitude of words, which is the Proper work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

The Ordinary Gloss out of St. *Chrysostom* asks the same Question: *If we must not use many words in our Prayers, how shall we pray without ceasing, as 'tis commanded?* And answers out of the same Father; *That both are to be observ'd in our Religious Devotions:* viz. 1. *That our Prayers be short.* And 2ly, *Frequent and continued. So Christ hath both commanded,*

manded, and also exemplified in his Personal Prayers. And St. Paul *also; That our Prayers be short, but often renewed; in few words, but with great devotion; ending briefly, and beginning afresh; leaving some intervals, or spaces of time for the reinquickning and enkindling the fire of fervor and holy zeal in the Soul. And 'tis added, out of* Cassianus; *The Fathers conceived it most useful to use short, but frequent Prayers. To be frequent, that our Souls may cleave the more stedfastly unto God, by often addresses to his Majesty. To be short, that we may quench the fiery darts of the Devil; who is most busie to tempt us to dulness and deadness of heart in our Prayers; which he very easily effects, when the Prayers we say, or hear, are long, and continued without any intermission.*

'Tis recorded of those Primitive Christians in *Egypt*, who were most famous for their transcendent Devotions, and great Austerities in the exercise of Religious Duties; That their Prayers were many and often, night and day continued; and yet, That they were short also: not only in their solemn Assemblies, and publick Offices of Devotion, but also; That their private Prayers were as so many Raptures, and Ejaculations, or Desires, darted up into Heaven. For, as the Father saith hereupon; *Absit ab Oratione multa loquatio, sed non desit multa precatio, si fervens perseveret intentio. Let not our Devotions be accompanied with much speaking, but much praying, so long as we can hold out in attention and fervency.*

FINIS.